

Message Text

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S E C R E T BUENOS AIRES 4086

NODIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS SHUM, AR

SUBJECT ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 134918

1. TODAY IS MILITARY DAY IN ARGENTINA AND PRESIDENT VIDELA HAS BEEN ALL OVER BUENOS AIRES MAKING SPEECHES. I VISITED WITH HIM AT HIS OFFICE AT 1815 RE THE NEWSOM MISSION AS REQUESTED REFTEL. VIDELA APPEARED TIRED AND TATTERED AND TORN AND NOT AS BOUNCY AS USUAL. THIS PROMPTED ME TO THANK HIM FOR HAVING RECEIVED THE NEWSOM TEAM SO GRACIOUSLY. I EMPHASIZED THAT OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOA WHOM NEWSOM SAY WERE ALSO MOST FORTHCOMING AND COOPERATIVE.

2. IT WAS APPARENT HE APPRECIATED THESE PRELIMINARY REMARKS. I THEN INFORMED HIM OF MY INSTRUCTIONS AND THE CONTENTS OF STATE 134918. I OUTLINED EACH ITEM STEP BY STEP. WHEN I FINISHED HE SMILED, GAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF AND SAID, "YOUR NEWS GIVES ME THE SPRIT TO ABSOLUTELY INSIST ON A TREMENDOUS IMPROVEMENT ON OUR PERFORMANCE IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS."

3. I MADE CLEAR TO THE PRESIDENT THAT MILITARY TRAINING HAD SOME CONDITIONS PRECEDENT BEFORE BECOMING EFFIECTIVE:

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(A) AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOA INVITATION TO THE INTERAMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO VISIT ARGENTINA THAT CONGRESS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONTACTED AND CONSULTED;
(B) THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A MEETING OF MINDS BETWEEN THE GOA AND OAS ON THE COMMISSION'S TERMS OF OPERATION IN ARGENTINA. VIDELA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE PURPOSE OF THE REQUIREMENTS, BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE LENGTH OF

TIME INVOLVED IN CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTATION. HE SAID THAT HE WORRIED ABOUT AN "UNUSUAL DELAY" POSSIBLY INVOLVED IN CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTATIONS. LIKEWISE, REACHING AN ACCORD ON GROUND RULES WITH THE COMMISSION MAY ALSO PRESENT THE SAME DILEMMA OF DELAY.

4. I ALSO EXPLAINED TO VIDELA THAT, IF FAVORABLE TRENDS CONTINUED AND POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIONS WERE TAKEN BY GOA, OTHER APPROVALS WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. HE SMILED AND SAID "I HOPE SO." OF COURSE, I MADE CLEAR THAT THE OPPOSITE WOULD BE TRUE IF THE REVERSE OCCURRED.

5. VIDELA STATED HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH AMBASSADOR NEWSOM. HE SAID HE FELT THAT THE UNDERSECRETARY CAME TO ARGENTINA WITH AN OPEN MIND AND WAS A MOST OBJECTIVE PERSON. HE THEN SAID THAT GOA DIDN'T HAVE ANY POSITIVE ANSWERS ON THE DISAPPEARANCES THAT CAN BE DOCUMENTED PUBLICALLY. VIDELA WAS MOST EMPHATIC IN STATING THAT VERY POSITIVE STRIDES WOULD BE MADE IN THE AREA OF PRISONER RELEASES. HE ASSERTED HE COULD NOT NOW GIVE ME FIGURES. HE WAS SURE THAT BY SEPTEMBER 30 MANY PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED. SPEAKING CONFIDENTLY, HE SAID THAT CERTAINLY BY THE END OF THE YEAR THE LIST OF PERSONS RELEASED FROM PRISON WOULD BE MTST IMPRESSIVE.

6. VIDELA AGAIN MADE REFERENCE TO MINISTER OF INTERIOR
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HARGUNDEGUY'S SPEECH ORDERING THE POLICE TO STOP EXTRA LEGAL VIOLENCE AND BRUTALITY IN THEIR OPERATIONS AND TO TREAT PRISONERS HUMANELY. HE LIKEWISE CITED A SPEECH MADE BY COL. RICCERI, CHIEF OF POLICE FOR PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES. RICCERI, RECENTLY MANDATED ALL POLICE OFFICERS UNDER HIS COMMAND TO GET IN LINE AS PER HARGUNDEGUY'S ORDERS. I ASKED VIDELA ABOUT THE MILITARY FORCES, AND HE REPLIED THAT SAME NEW RULES NOW APPLY TO THEM BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC FOR OBVIOUS REASONS.

7. OBSERVING THAT VIDELA WAS NOW MORE RELAXED, I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD BEEN WORKING ALL DAY TO AVOID ANY LEAKS BY HIS FOREIGN OFFICE. IN A HALFWAY JOKING MANNER, I ADVISED THE PRESIDENT THAT HIS FOREIGN OFFICE WAS DEMANDING TO KNOW THE SUBJECT MATTER I WAS TO DISCUSS WITH HIM. I SAID I AVOIDED LEAKS BY STATING THAT HE (THE PRESIDENT) WAS EXPECTING ME AND THAT SUBJECT MATTER WAS OF SUCH A NATURE THAT PRESIDENT ONLY COULD BE PRIVY TO IT. HE LAUGHED AND SAID HE APPRECIATED MY RESPECTING HIS CONFIDENCE.

8. I LIKEWISE INFORMED HIM THAT HIS AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON HAD JUST CALLED ME AT HOME. I STATED THAT HIS

AMBASSADOR WANTED ME TO INFORM HIM OF THE RESULTS OF THE NEWSOM MISSION. I TOLD HIS AMBASSADOR THAT A FULL REPORT WOULD BE GIVEN TO HIS PRESIDENT ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT. VIDELA AGAIN LAUGHED AND SAID "IF YOU HAD TOLD OUR AMBASSADOR ANYTHING HE WOULD HAVE CALLED A PRESS CONFERENCE." VIDELA CASTIGATED HIS AMBASSADOR FOR HIS PRESS CONFERENCE AND FELT IT HAD BEEN TOTALLY IMPROPER. THIS GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIKEWISE TELL VIDELA THAT I ALSO WAS ANNOYED WITH HIS AMBASSADOR AND FELT THAT HE HAD MISREPRESENTED FACTS. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT VIDELA WAS UNHAPPY WITH HIS AMBASSADOR.

9. VIDELA THANKED ME AND ASKED ME TO CONVEY TO THE DEPARTMENT HIS GRATITUDE FOR ITS RAPIDITY OF ACTION HE.,
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SAID HE NEVER SAY A MISSION COME WITH AN ANSWER SO QUICKLY. HE ALSO THANKED ME FOR SETTING UP THE MISSION BY WORKING DIRECTLY ALONG WITH GENERAL VIOLA. VIDELA AGAIN REPEATED THAT WHENEVER I WANT INFORMATION TO GET TO HIM TO PLEASE CONTACT GENERAL VIOLA. HE SAID WHEN YOU TALK TO VIOLA, IT IS LIKE TALKING TO ME.

10. HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT ARGENTINA BELONGS IN THE AMERICAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND HE IS PROUD OF THAT FACT.
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